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Articles in Today's Clips

Thursday, July 28, 2005

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Michigan Report

July 27, 2005

STUDY SAYS MORE STATE CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY

The number of children in Michigan living in families with incomes below the federal poverty level increased during the first years of the decade, according to the annual Kids Count survey released on Wednesday. The study, part of a nationwide study looking at the numbers of children in poor families and other factors that could signal ongoing problems (such as the number of low birth weight children born) said that Michigan ranked 25th out of the 50 states on all the factors assessed.

The study is done nationally by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and sponsored in Michigan by the Michigan League for Human Services, an organization backing greater state efforts to help the poor.

Michigan improved in a number of areas from 2000 to 2003, the latest year for many of the statistics, including in the number of teenage girls having babies, the percentage of high school students who drop out of school, and in the percentage of infant mortality. Still, even with the improvement, Michigan still ranks higher than the national average in a number of those factors.

For example, the infant mortality rate fell from 8.2 deaths per 1,000 to 8.1, but nationally it went up slightly from 6.9 deaths per 1,000 to 7.

While nationally the percentage of children living in poverty rose from 17 percent to 18 percent, in Michigan it went from 14 percent to 16 percent.

There were a number of statistics where the state scored better than the national average. For example, in education, both fourth and eighth grade students in Michigan scored better than the national average in reading and math comprehension.

Commitment to Kids

Kids Count makes needs clear; state must maintain services

Detroit Free Press

July 28, 2005

When fully a third of Michigan children live in families where no one has a full-time job, the stresses on them can be dire -- and the state simply must maintain its services to them, no matter how stretched its budget. From a human standpoint, their lives are at stake. From a cold, fiscal point of view, they can cost the taxpayers something now or much more later.

A scarcity of jobs during tough times is nothing new in Michigan, but the state's inability to join the national recovery becomes startlingly apparent in the annual Kids Count. Michigan slipped from 30th to 35th among the states for percentage of children in families with no full-time wage earner in 2003. That includes 108,000 children whose parents had no work at all, a stunning 44% increase from 2000 to 2003.

Amazingly, many other indicators of child well-being have held up decently.

Michigan is below the national average for teen births, which continue to decline. Vaccination rates have risen and now meet the national average. Michigan students for the most part are scoring slightly better than the national average on tests.

But maintaining that progress requires keeping children housed, fed and healthy through state-supported programs that the Republican-controlled Legislature appears ready to cut.

The Kids Count report highlighted the plight of families who have not yet left welfare for work, pointing out the obstacles, such as depression, drug abuse and domestic violence, that can interfere with finding and holding on to a job even in good economic times. But rather than intensify services to parents caught in those situations, some of next year's budget proposals would simply jettison them from the welfare rolls.

The adults trapped in those situations do not deserve such disdain, and their children ought not to be put at risk. Certainly none of them created these situations for themselves.

Obviously, the best cure for child poverty is a parent with a job. They are role models for self-sufficiency as well as providers. But when the going gets tough, the weak shouldn't get steamrolled. That kind of damage can span generations.

Lawmakers should aim to lift kids from poverty Politics must not slow accommodations

Thursday, July 28, 2005

Michigan's high unemployment is taking a serious toll on the state's children. According to KIDS COUNT, an annual snapshot of children's well-being nationally, some 400,000 kids in Michigan were living in poverty in 2003 - up 50,000 over figures in the year 2000.

The KIDS COUNT report also indicates about one-third of the state's 2.5 million children in 2003 lived in households where parents didn't have full-time, permanent jobs. And of that group, 108,000 kids were living in households where neither parent worked that year.

The state Department of Human Services maintains a goal of reducing child poverty by 33 percent by the year 2010.

But there's much that lawmakers can immediately pursue to improve the lot of the state's destitute children and their families. One is for the Legislature's Republican majority to abandon trying to balance the state's budget on the backs of the poor by giving up its proposed cuts to child care, to its cash payments for needy families, and to DHS staff and training. It also should walk away from efforts to get some people on Medicaid to pay for part of their benefits.

How can the state continue to afford programs designed to help the poor? By looking for more of the kinds of operating efficiencies that became hallmarks of the Engler and Granholm administrations, and by finding new, more cost-effective ways of doing business.

Democrats earlier in the year shot down legislation that would have the state determine how much it spends on payroll and turn the system over to an outside firm if doing so would cost less money. If Democrats are compelled to fault Republican cuts to services for the poor, they've got to be willing to find some better ways to continue paying for them. Privatizing payroll has saved other states millions. Reflexively stiff-arming the idea in Michigan solves nothing.

Lawmakers also need to reach an accommodation on the governor's \$2 billion, jobs-creating bond issue that would finance investments in automotive technology, clean energy and the life sciences. They should consider expanding DHS's family resource centers, which are intended to reduce poverty by educating parents and enhancing early childhood education. And they should work harder to secure the kinds of grants geared toward bringing employment to devastated areas like Benton Harbor in southwest Michigan.

Kids' living in poverty should be unacceptable to all Michigan lawmakers. To make improvements, lawmakers on both sides of the aisle need to break free of their political underpinnings and work together better.

To cut child poverty, create jobs

The Kalamazoo Gazette

Thursday, July 28, 2005

The troubling report from the annual Kids Count survey of the state of America's children demonstrates just how important jobs -- good-paying jobs -- are for this state.

Michigan ranked right in the middle among all states in the survey on a number of measures. Between 2000 and 2003, dropout rates, the number of teen births and the number of idle teens fell -- a clear improvement.

But children are clearly feeling the pain of Michigan's stubbornly high unemployment rate.

Between 2000 and 2003, the percentage of Michigan children living in households in which no parent had a full-time job rose to 34 percent, from 31 percent. And the percentage of children growing up in poverty rose from 14 percent to 16 percent during the same time period.

The state's response should be twofold:

First, make sure the safety net that protects these children is not shredded in the rush to trim astronomical federal and state budget deficits. Preserve Medicaid for children, nutrition programs, early education, subsidies for adequate housing, subsidies for safe child care to enable parents to get back to work. America does not benefit if a large percentage of its children are ill-fed, unhealthy, living in slums, are neglected and running the streets and are unprepared for school.

At the same time, a combination of job training and job creation is the best welfare program for their parents. That's a real challenge for those who are persistently unemployed or underemployed, whose academic achievement is low, work skills are minimal, and who may have mental health or substance abuse problems.

The state Department of Human Services, under the Granholm administration, is aiming to cut child poverty rates by a third by 2010.

We hope that's also the goal of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and any other job-creation department.

It's important that the social services safety net provided by the Human Services Department not be cut down when unemployment rates are high.

But the real solution to child poverty is making sure parents are supporting their families with real jobs.

Michigan Report

July 27, 2005

HOUSE APPROPS OKS FUNDS FOR WELFARE CASELOADS

A supplemental funding bill containing mostly federal funds for rising welfare caseloads and new voting equipment unanimously cleared the House Appropriations Committee on Wednesday.

The bill (HB 4436) totals \$103.8 million, only \$1.9 million of which comes from the state's general fund, to be spent in the current fiscal year.

It contains \$7.64 million in federal funds to pay for 1,700 more welfare cases than Governor Jennifer Granholm and the Legislature expected in the current 2004-05 fiscal year when they agreed on the budget in 2004. It also includes \$14 million in federal funds to cover higher than expected monthly benefit costs in the Food Assistance Program.

The biggest single appropriation is \$35.6 million (\$1.9 million general fund) under the Help America Vote Act that authorizes the Department of State to spend federal money and provides the required state matching funds. The money would buy new voting equipment and improve access for voters with disabilities and those living outside the United States.

The bill now goes to the full House for consideration.

Thursday, July 28, 2005

Only time will tell for Abraham

By Luther Keith / The Detroit News

Try as he might, Nathaniel Abraham can't escape the evil deed that has defined his life since he was a mere 11 years old.

Abraham made national headlines in 1997 when the Pontiac youngster used a rifle to shoot and kill Ronnie Greene Jr., a man he didn't know, and became one of the youngest people to be charged with and convicted of murder in the history of the United States.

He was tried as an adult but was sentenced in 1999 as a minor under Michigan law, meaning he was incarcerated and will be released in January 2007 when he turns 21 years of age -- whether he is fully rehabilitated or not.

According to a report in Tuesday's Detroit News, his tenure at the W.J. Maxey Training School has been a challenging one as he has struggled with becoming an emotionally mature and responsible adult.

While he has learned poetry and tutored other residents of the facility, he still too often blames others for his own transgressions, according to counselors.

Yet, I can't help but wonder if as a society we aren't subliminally rooting for Abraham, and so many others that are serving prison time, to fail -- reinforcing the lock-the-jail-door-and-throw-away-the-key philosophy that plays so well with many politicians and talk shows.

Virtually every newspaper headline, as well as radio and television reports, continues to describe Abraham as a "young killer," factually accurate but still shrouding him and defining him as the person he was when he shot and killed Greene -- not the rehabilitated person our juvenile justice system is trying to help him become.

Yes, killing someone is a terrible act. Nothing Abraham can do or say can adequately compensate for the loss of Greene's life.

However, under our justice system, the best in the world even with its many imperfections, Abraham is entitled to remake his life, a life that took a wrong turn almost from the beginning. He was smoking pot by the time he was 6, had 22 brushes with the law over larcenies and assaults by age 9 and shot family members with a BB gun by the age of 10, according to The News.

Now living under the rigid discipline of the training center, he is looking forward to his eventual release, perhaps moving to a halfway house before he is officially a free citizen.

At a court hearing earlier this year, responding to a conflict with Maxey staff members, he was quoted in The News as stating: "I have emotions like everyone else. At times, people still judge me for what I was then."

Did you know that Tony-nominated theater and movie actor Charles S. Dutton and boxing promoter extraordinaire Don King both served prison time for killing men?

Dutton served seven years after stabbing a man to death in a street fight. He discovered his passion for acting while he was incarcerated and went on to study drama at Yale. King beat a man to death in a dispute over a debt and was convicted of manslaughter, serving nearly four years in prison. He has gone on to promote some of the biggest fights in boxing history, including the 1974 classic Rumble in the Jungle between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman in Zaire.

Today, Dutton and King are famous for what they have done with their lives since they left prison.

Time will tell if Abraham will one day be known for something other than being a "young killer."

Hopefully, he will write a different story with the rest of his life, one that merits a different headline.

Luther Keith is senior editor of The Detroit News. His column appears on Mondays and Thursdays. He can be reached at 313-222-2675 or at lkeith@detnews.com.

The Herald-Palladium

The Newspaper for Southwest Michigan

FRIDAY, July 22, 2005

BENTON HARBOR

Out too late

Police sweep kids off the streets after curfew, cite their parents

By JULIE SWIDWA
H-P Staff Writer

BENTON HARBOR — Teenagers lined up in chairs against the wall, eating popcorn and drinking juice while they waited for their parents to pick them up.

Across the room, Interim Police Chief Al Mingo comforted a crying 7-year-old while officer Jared Graves helped the child tie his shoes.

In the lobby, parents waited their turn to be questioned by police.

That was the scene Thursday night and early this morning at the Benton Harbor police station as the department conducted its third "Street Sweep," picking up 22 children they found on the streets past curfew.

"I'm all for the curfew. Certain parents just don't care," said Sylvia Kimble, waiting in the lobby of the station to be reunited with her 14-year-old son.

She said that, in her case, her son apparently left the house while she was asleep. "He knows better."

The department began a serious crackdown on curfew violators this month. Interim Captain Mark Reece said the first sweep was impromptu, the second was planned but had a few flaws and the third, which began at 10:30 p.m. Thursday, was fine-tuned.

About 20 officers from the Benton Harbor Police Department, the Berrien County Sheriff's Department and Michigan State Police gathered at 10 p.m. for a briefing before dispersing to their jobs.

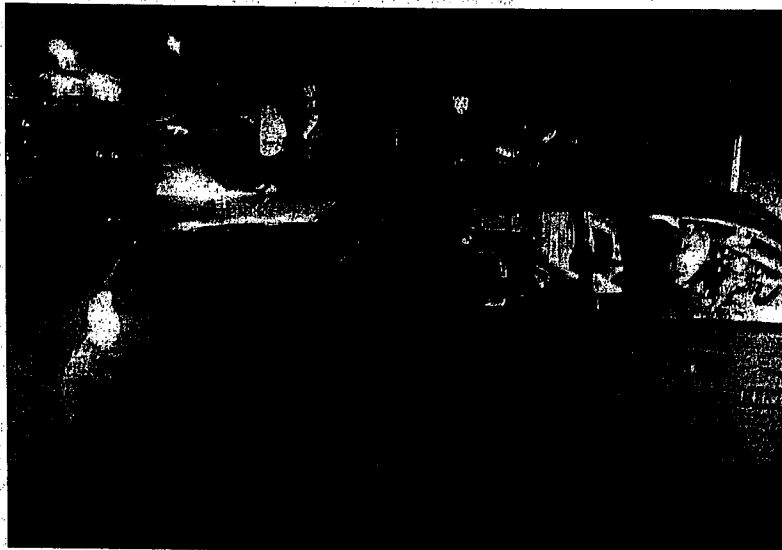
Some stayed at the station to process the children as they were brought in by teams of officers who combed the streets.

Also on hand were Elvin Gonzalez, administrator of the Berrien County Trial Court Family Division; Jerry Frank, director of the Department of Human Services; Marion Maier, child protective services supervisor; and probation officer supervisors.

"I'm here in support of our partnership with the police departments," Frank said. "This takes community collaboration. If there's a situation where a parent isn't located to take custody of a child, then a police officer can take the child into protective custody."

Frank said court staff then could order the child into placement in a foster home or shelter such as The Link. Or, if an officer picking up children suspects abuse or neglect, family services can step in.

Sheriff's Deputy J.D. Root picked up two youngsters, 7 and 8,



BENTON HARBOR POLICE officers talk to juveniles found on the streets after curfew Thursday night while three youngsters already picked up wait in a police car. At top, Benton Harbor Police Chief Al Mingo briefs officers before the street sweep.

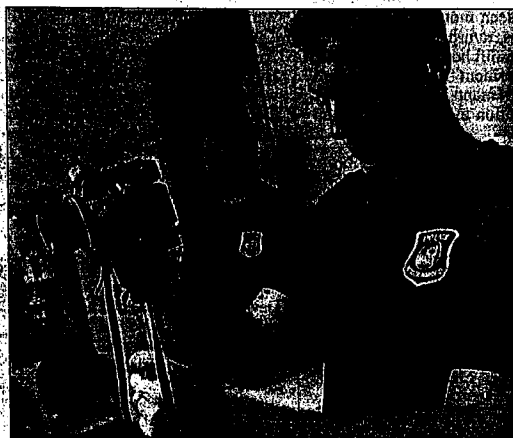


MARION MAIER, child protective services supervisor with the Department of Human Services, tries to reach a child's parent by phone Thursday night.

at Broadway and Empire around 11:30 Thursday night. He said they were with an 11- or 12-year-old brother, but the brother ran when police approached.

"They're scared and upset. There's absolutely no excuse for this," Root said. "You know what the really sad thing is? They don't know where Mama is."

Aritha Meridy's 16-year-old son knew where to find his mother when police brought him to the



BENTON HARBOR police officers Andrew Collins (right) and Cory Peaks take digital mug shots of children brought into the Benton Harbor Police Station for breaking the 10:30 p.m. curfew Thursday.

police station.

"I gave him permission to walk to where I was. I was visiting a neighbor, and he was walking to where I was. He had called and got permission," Meridy said.

Still, she favors the curfew law, which requires children 16 and younger to be inside or with a parent or guardian after 10:30 p.m. on weekdays and 11:30 p.m. on weekends. Mingo announced earlier this summer that police would

begin a serious crackdown on curfew violators and would not accept excuses.

"I saw it in the paper but I forgot," Meridy said. "He called me for permission to walk and I said OK."

Reece said children picked up past curfew are cited for curfew violation, and parents are ticketed under parental responsibility laws.

Please see **CURFEW**, page 8A

Parents of curfew violators cited

BENTON HARBOR — Interim Police Chief Al Mingo said the following adults were cited under "Parental Responsibility" laws after 22 children were apprehended during Thursday night's curfew crackdown:

Aretha Jean Meridy, 437 Cedar St.; Georgia Mae Johnson, 176 E. Britain Ave.; Steven Lee Dean, 209 Madeline Ave.; Bobbie Estere Watkins, 300 River Terrace, Apt. 511; Shan-

non Marie Anderson, 635 Buena Vista; Ira Lee Jones, 300 River Terrace, Apt. 710; Mildred Merrell Vinson, 744 Madison; Tamekia Nicole Jordan, 1850 Highland, Bldg. 3, Apt. 5; and Tamico Lashawn Mosley, 1084 Highland.

Also: Massie Lee McKinney, 1121 Lavette; Molly Mae Mathis, 1183 Highland; Sherry Y. Williams, 357 E. Empire; Calvin Brimite, 2482 Lawrence;

Mara Felicia Willis, 114 N. McCord; Nikki Ann Buchana, 160 Robbins; Gloria Jean McKinney, 210 Hastings; and Sylvia Lynn Kimble, 956 Buss, No. 4.

There were 22 juveniles apprehended and 17 parents cited. Mingo said in some cases a parent was cited for more than one child.

The last child was picked up from the police station at 3 a.m., the chief said.



Don Campbell / H-P staff

ELVIN GONZALES, the administrator of the Berrien County Trial Court Family Division, (left) briefs Benton Harbor police officers, as well as deputies from the Berrien County Sheriff's Department and troopers from the Michigan State Police, before they headed out Thursday to enforce the 10:30 p.m. curfew.

CURFEW

From page 1A

Parents can be fined up to \$300. The youngsters are dealt with individually. They could be ordered to do community service, and serious offenders might spend time in the juvenile center or on electronic tether, he said.

Mingo said about 20 children have been picked up in each of the sweeps conducted so far, and there was only one repeat offender that he recalls.

"That's not necessarily good news. It shows us it's not a small group over and over, but that the problem is more widespread," he said. "We're going to continue to do this until it's difficult for us to locate juveniles on the streets at night."

Meanwhile, Mingo said, the community should rest assured there are plenty of police available for routine police work during the sweeps.

That proved true Thursday night when one team of police removed more than juveniles from the streets. While looking for curfew violators outside

River Terrace Apartments, Sgt. Joel Deenik and Officer Theodore Robert approached three young men.

Hearing the distinctive click of a handgun, Deenik quickly ordered the men to the ground and called for back-up. One of the men tried to run, and one threw something into the bushes, where a semi-automatic pistol was found by police a few minutes later.

It was not immediately clear which of the men had been carrying the gun, or what the group's intent was. All three men were apprehended.

Mom runs out of appeals

Thursday, July 28, 2005

By Steven Hepkershepker@citpat.com -- 768-4923

A Jackson mother serving a life sentence in the beating death of her 4-year-old son has exhausted her appeals at the state level.

The Michigan Supreme Court this week refused to hear the appeal of LaChante Mobley. A jury found her guilty of the Dec. 19, 2002, beating death of Le'Marquis Hereford.

The state Court of Appeals rejected her appeal in January.

Her attorney cited the inconsistency in her verdict: She was found not guilty of second-degree murder, but guilty of child abuse and felony murder.

Felony murder requires an underlying felony and is treated the same as first-degree murder, with life in prison without parole. The appeals court said juries are not required to make consistent verdicts, and that it was reasonable to conclude Mobley was guilty of felony murder.

Testimony indicated both Mobley and her live-in boyfriend, amateur boxer Anwar Benin, struck the boy in the days before he died from a torn liver. Police believe Benin struck the fatal blows, but a separate jury acquitted him of murder.

He pleaded guilty to second-degree child abuse and is serving two to four years in prison.

Prosecutors said the real inconsistency was that Benin was not convicted of murder also.

Michigan Report

July 27, 2005

DEMS CALL ON RETAILERS, MANUFACTURER TO RECALL GAME

A graphic sex scene in “Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas” has spurred some Senate Democrats to call for a re-rating and recall of the video game.

Sen. Mark Schauer (D-Battle Creek) and Sen. Ray Basham (D-Taylor) announced Wednesday they are calling on the manufacturer of the video game to recall it and for Michigan retailers to pull the game off their shelves. The furor arose over a hidden scene in the game, which requires a special password and which depicts a man and woman in various sex acts.

The maker of the game, Rockstar, had issued a statement saying they were not responsible for placing the scenes in the game. But the PlayStation 2 version of the game revealed the same scenes, and PS2 games cannot have any technology added, only accessed. Rockstar then backtracked and admitted they had written the code into the game, and the Entertainment Software Rating Board changed the game’s rating to Adult Only instead of Mature.

In addition, Democrats launched a website at www.protectmichiganschildren.org which is designed to build public support for legislation aimed at restricting children’s access to violent video games. The bills – SB 416, SB 249, SB 463 and SB 464 – passed Senate in May.

“It’s disgusting these kind of images are available,” Mr. Schauer said.

Mr. Basham said the recall request is not censorship or restriction of speech, but of keeping obscene images away from children.

“The folks who drafted the U.S. Constitution had no idea they’d be dealing with these kinds of video games,” he said.

Mr. Schauer said he was told Rockstar was working on a new version of the game and agreed to re-rate all the existing games.

Lansing State Journal

Published July 28, 2005

Dems seek recall of video game with explicit content Retailers urged to stop selling 'San Andreas'

By David Eggert
Associated Press

Democratic lawmakers and Gov. Jennifer Granholm want Michigan retailers to stop selling a popular video game in which explicit sexual content can be unlocked with an Internet download. State Senate Democrats said Wednesday the maker of "Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas" should recall the game and urged retailers to pull it from their shelves. Granholm sent a letter to nearly 60 retailers last week asking them to adopt a policy of not selling adult-rated games.

Sen. Mark Schauer, D-Battle Creek, said the industry cannot effectively police itself. He criticized House Republicans for not passing legislation that would make it illegal to sell violent or sexually explicit video games to youth under age 17.

"It is disgusting that these types of images are available," he said of the download that allows a player of the PC version of the game to see a male and female character engaged in various graphic sexual positions.

Matt Resch, spokesman for Republican House Speaker Craig DeRoche of Novi, said a House panel is reviewing the legislation to make sure it can withstand a likely court challenge.

"We agree we need to get these games out of the hands of young kids," Resch said. "But we want to make sure anything we do is in line with the U.S. Constitution."

The New York Times

July 28, 2005

Suit Over Grand Theft Auto

A woman who says she was upset that she bought the video game Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas for her 14-year-old grandson without knowing it contained hidden sexually explicit scenes filed a lawsuit yesterday on behalf of consumers nationwide, The Associated Press reported. The woman, Florence Cohen, 85, of the Bronx, said in a lawsuit filed in Federal District Court in Manhattan that the game's manufacturer, Rockstar Games, and its parent company, Take Two Interactive Software Inc., based in New York, had engaged in false, misleading and deceptive practices. She is seeking unspecified damages on behalf of herself and all consumers nationwide, saying the company should give up its profits from the game for what amounted to false advertising, consumer deception and unfair business practices. The company says it has halted production of the game in the current form and is working on a version without the hidden sexual content.

FEAR INFESTS CHERRY CROP: Michigan fruit growers face a labor shortage amid reports of massive migrant deportations. U.S. border officials say they're just rumors.

July 28, 2005

BY SHAWN WINDSOR
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

One migrant worker was arrested on his way home from the hospital. Another was whisked away while picking cherries on a farm. They've disappeared from Mexican grocery stores, Spanish dances at VFW halls and Catholic churches.

The stories are often the same: A worker runs an errand and vanishes. A week, maybe two, later, the phone rings. The migrant calls from Mexico; the immigration papers didn't check out.

Such reports are spreading faster than wind, blowing through migrant worker communities in a five-county patch of northwestern Michigan, an area, as it happens, that produces a big chunk of the state's strawberries, cherries, wine grapes and peaches.

Many farmers are bracing for the worst labor shortage in memory and the prospect of watching their crops rot. Migrant workers depend on that work for money to send to their families in Mexico. Fruit retailers depend on the harvest for summer income.

At the moment, nearly all of them are beginning to think the crop cycle is at the mercy of geopolitics as Homeland Security reaches into Michigan's fruit belt.

Farmers, migrants and state labor department officials are convinced that federal authorities have stepped up raids on fruit farms and the communities surrounding them.

The government disagrees. The stories, federal officials say, are based on rumor.

Real or not, fear and paranoia cling to the bucolic landscape this summer. Fear of disappearing. Fear of deportation. Fear of losing crops. Fear of losing money. A few farmers say they are losing as much as \$2,000 a day because they cannot find workers to pick the fruit; local teens want little to do with the intense work.

The crucial fruit of the moment is the sweet cherry -- its harvest lasts another week.

Josh Wunsch of Wunsch Farms on the Old Mission Peninsula, a finger of near-perfect fruit-growing soil north of Traverse City, estimates he and his sellers have lost \$60,000.

MICHIGAN MIGRANTS

Come from:

Mostly Mexico;
Michigan is their
final stop of the
harvest season.

How many
workers: About
40,000, ranking

Michigan sixth
behind Florida,
California, Texas
and South and
North Carolina.

Pay: Skilled sweet
cherry pickers can
earn \$150 a day
and want to be
paid by how
much they pick.

Housing: Migrants
live in camps on
the big farms -- in
apartments, old
houses or trailers.

History: Before
machines were
developed to
shake tart
cherries from

trees, more than
10,000 migrants
converged around
Traverse City to
pick cherries.

Today, far fewer
come. Sweet
cherries still must
be handpicked.

Source: Michigan
Department of
Labor and
Economic Growth

"Anybody with a good suntan can get pulled in," Wunsch said of the reports of raids and deportations. Sarcastically, he added: "We are safe from cherry pickers. God bless us." Wunsch said a worker on his neighbor's farm was plucked from a church a couple of weeks ago but released the next day when his papers checked out.

Rumors and paranoia among the migrant workers began circulating last year.

Like a lot of farmers in the area, Wunsch began planning for the possible shortage last winter by trying to navigate a federal program designed to help bring in workers. But critics of the program say the process is slow and expensive.

"It requires lawyer-like skill to get through the paperwork," said Jim Bardenhagen, who is Leelanau County's Michigan State University Extension director.

Congress has tackled the issue with legislation that would allow workers in the country for up to three years, but the bills have never made it out of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Among majority Republicans, there is conflict: Some want to tighten borders. Others want to allow workers in to help the farmers and other businesses that need them.

"It seems like a paradox," said Kevin Benson, an agricultural specialist with the state's Department of Labor and Economic Growth. "We have a porous border, but on the other hand, we are up in Michigan deporting people in the middle of a harvest."

Benson, a liaison for Michigan's farmers, estimates that 35,000 to 40,000 migrant workers arrive in Michigan every year. Most head for farms in southwestern Michigan to work in blueberry fields and apple orchards. Farmers there haven't had issues finding workers.

Benson's theory is that Hispanics in the region are entrenched politically and hold positions of authority. Otherwise, he has no explanation.

Several thousand have traditionally come farther north to cherry and wine country to work at about 200 large fruit farms in Leelanau, Grand Traverse, Benzie, Antrim and Charlevoix counties.

Bardenhagen, the MSU Extension director, said at least 70% of the workers hired in the area are illegal. But they have documents, he said, and it's not the farmers' job to authenticate them.

"You know you are going to get some" illegal workers, he said.

Matt Albence sympathizes with farmers, but the deputy special agent in charge of Immigration Customs Enforcement for the Detroit region, which includes the fruit country, said the fear and paranoia is unfounded.

Though more resources have been pumped into border patrol and immigration the past couple of years, he said there haven't been any sweeps.

"We just don't have the resources to go driving around picking people up," he said.

He said percolating rumors are likely the result of a few random pickups, where local cops have stopped someone for a vehicle infraction or the like and called in immigration officials. Sheriffs and police chiefs also say there hasn't been an increase in migrant arrests.

But like so many other things, perception becomes its own truth. The paranoia is so intense in Traverse City and north into the Leelanau and Old Mission peninsulas that many migrant workers refuse to leave their homes except for work, and even then, make the trek with a thumping chest.

"A lot of people don't like to go to the grocery store," said Priscilla Sanchez San Juan, 19, who is married to an immigrant from Mexico. "When they do go, the husband usually stays at home."

San Juan also has a brother-in-law from Mexico who lived on the Leelanau Peninsula. He worked for a winery until he disappeared a few months ago.

The winery owners looked for him for days. A week later, a call came from Monterrey, Mexico.

The migrant worker was calling to say he'd been deported. The winery's owners said he was an experienced, skilled, loyal farmhand, the most valuable kind of employee in the region these days.

They are working with the U.S. and Mexican governments to bring him back.

They don't know whether they'll ever see him again.

Contact SHAWN WINDSOR at 313-222-6487 or windsor@freepress.com.

Tribe to build community center near Standish

Thursday, July 28, 2005

By Helen Lounsbury BAY CITY TIMES WRITER

STANDISH - The Saginaw Chippewa Tribe starts construction today on an 8,500-square-foot community center near Standish aimed at serving tribal members and area residents.

The new center will add seven times the space the tribe's current Saganing Outreach Center offers in Arenac County's Standish Township. Medical examination rooms and a banquet room with seating for 200 are among the features planned.

"Our vision has expanded over time to serve not just our members but to connect Native Americans and the larger community together," said center director Don Nelson. "Our goal with the new building is to be inclusive."

Arenac's 55-member Saganing community is part of the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe. The Mount Pleasant-based tribe is funding the new building, expected to open next spring.

"This is the biggest expansion in the Saganing community for years," said Joseph Sowmick, tribal spokesman. "We fully expect that by adding services there, we'll see more tribal members returning to the area and more jobs available to them."

Such was the case in Mount Pleasant, Sowmick added, where the Chippewas developed tribal services during the 1970s. Health care, education, recreation, police, youth and senior adult services are among services the Saganings plan to expand in Standish Township.

The new center will take shape on Worth Road, across from the tribe's Saganing Methodist Indian Mission church.

"This is a big accomplishment for us," said LeEtta Hansen, tribal council representative for the Saganings. "We're celebrating it."

Helen Lounsbury covers regional news for The Times. She can be reached at 1-800-727-7661.

Camp aide to offer help on subsidized housing

CORUNNA

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Thursday, July 28, 2005

By Marjory Raymer **JOURNAL STAFF WRITER**

U.S. Rep. Dave Camp, R-Midland, is offering help to constituents trying to resolve problems with federally subsidized housing.

Camp's regional representative Lori Particka will be available to meet with constituents from 2-3 p.m. Friday at the Mid-Michigan Chapter of the American Red Cross, 702 W. Corunna Ave. in Corunna.

Residents are invited to stop by. No appointment is necessary.

Marjory Raymer

Leslie Lacy: Fixing poverty aids the affluent, too

I wish we could regain the spirit of the War on Poverty.

It began in 1964 under Democrat Lyndon Johnson, continued under Republican Richard Nixon, then petered out under economic bad times and conservative backlash. Its legacy includes Head Start, Medicare, food stamps, and Social Security benefits tied to the inflation rate.

Opinions differ on the value and effectiveness of fighting poverty.

In the 1960s, Oscar Lewis coined the term "culture of poverty." Controversy followed. Liberals decried the term as insulting. Conservatives used Lewis's writing to place moral blame on the poor, and to use that moral blame as an argument against anti-poverty programs.

I do believe there is such a thing as a culture of poverty. Most people who are third- and fourth-generation poor act and think differently than you and me. People living in poverty generation after generation often have lives that look chaotic and self-defeating to a middle-class observer. Instead of planning for the future, they're responding to today's crisis.

That can preclude a lot of middle-class behavior, like staying in school and making the effort to make good grades; spending money only on necessary items and saving the rest; waiting to have children until one is employed and settled into a secure long-term relationship, and so on.

It's frustrating to see poor people making bad choices guaranteed to keep them poor. But it's also frustrating to see better-off people blaming the poor entirely.

For poor minorities, there is lingering racism. Schools in poorer parts of town are substandard. Legitimate money-making opportunities in poorer parts of town are limited. Jobs for better than minimum wage are limited, period. Jobs in other parts of town are dicey to get and keep without reliable transportation and child care.

But for the sake of argument, let's say a great deal of poverty is the fault of the poor. Heck, let's say 100 percent of poverty is their own darned fault!

What does it accomplish - how does it help - to reach that conclusion?

I suspect some people enjoy pointing the finger. Consciences clear, they get to vote to keep their checkbooks firmly closed to those undeserving anti-poverty programs.

But that's about the only benefit. Meanwhile, a punitive "figure out how to live like me, effective immediately, or pay the price" mentality has given us an apparently permanent underclass - and the highest per capita imprisonment rate in the civilized world.

Instead of just getting mad at poor people, wouldn't it be in our own best interests to put some renewed energy into the War on Poverty? I'd love to see a fraction of what we're spending in Iraq every day invested in inner-city and rural schools, more job and job-preparedness training, adult literacy programs, and incentives for businesses.

Wouldn't it be worth it to see poverty-linked crime and drug use and illiteracy reduced? To see new habits replace old, self-destructive ones? Wouldn't it help all of society if we could take some concrete steps to break the vicious cycle of generational poverty?

What do you think? Leslie Lacy teaches reading at Lansing Community College and serves on the State Journal's Community Advisory Board. Write to her c/o Lansing State Journal, 120 E. Lenawee St., Lansing, MI 48919.

Mulhern touts mentoring

Thursday, July 28, 2005

BARRIE BARBER THE SAGINAW NEWS

First gentleman Daniel Mulhern is spreading a message he hopes sticks: Mentoring needs more volunteers, and such initiatives need standards every mentoring group can use.

Mulhern brought that theme Wednesday to about 25 people attending a mentoring workshop at Saginaw Valley State University. He later outlined his vision in an interview with The Saginaw News Editorial Board.

"What we're trying to do is create an epidemic of mentoring in Michigan," he said.

Mid-Michigan has had a strong jump in that arena, with an estimated 1,200 mentors at last estimate -- the fastest growing area of volunteers in the state. Michigan had nearly 16,000 last year.

Susan M. Furlo, director of the Saginaw County Foster Grandparent Program, has seen the growth firsthand.

"Recruitment hasn't been a problem here," she said. "We're funded for 54 (foster grandparents) and I have more than 80. That has just happened in the last two to three years."

Furlo, like other officials, was at a loss to explain why more people volunteer here than elsewhere. But the reasons they participate in her program include a desire to help children and to make a difference.

But 75 percent of mentors are women, Mulhern said, adding, "One of our big campaigns now is to put the men back in mentoring."

Consider, he said, that 80 percent of the juveniles in state custody are males who might respond to a man's guidance.

In too many instances, he said, "if you're not going to invest in your kids, they're going to end up in prison."

Mulhern wants to see an 11-point mentor group standard set throughout the state.

Among those: Mentoring four to 10 hours a month and keeping in contact with the recipient for at least a year, establishing a recruitment plan, setting up eligibility screening criteria, forming a strategy to match mentors with pupils, monitoring those matches and coming up with a way to evaluate mentoring effectiveness.

"They're good standards," he said. "We're trying to get people throughout the state to speak core messages."

Barrie Barber covers politics and government for The Saginaw News. You may reach him at 776-9725.

SNAPSHOTS

Tendercare volunteer has tender heart for B.C. center's residents

Christine Iwan

The Enquirer

Snapshots celebrates a full year of stories with this article. As promised, we used a reader suggestion as the topic of this 53rd installment of the feature. Tiana Cannon, activities director of Tendercare Health Center of Battle Creek, suggested Frank Worthem might be a worthy topic, and we agreed.

— Christine Iwan.

Every morning at Tendercare Health Center of Battle Creek, residents see a familiar face helping out in the dining room.

Frank Worthem has been volunteering at the facility for 11 years. He's there every day of the week — that includes Saturday and Sunday — fastening bibs, handing out breakfast trays or just giving someone a friendly pat on the shoulder.

"It's something I like," Worthem said. "Listening and talking to older people."

Worthem was chosen as Tendercare's volunteer of the year in Michigan. Tiana Cannon, the center's activities director, said there are about 35 people or organizations that volunteer at the center, and there are 37 of these facilities around Michigan.

In her nomination letter, Tiana wrote that Worthem makes residents realize what they can achieve, "then he helps them achieve those goals through support, praise, understanding and genuine belief in them."

Worthem, 72, first came to Tendercare when his mom lived there in the mid-90s. The Mississippi native had a heart attack earlier this year, which kept him away from his daily duty, but he returned to the morning dining room about three weeks ago.

He worked for Michigan Paperboard for 32 years and his children and grandchildren live in Michigan. His morning routine at Tendercare is the kind of work he has dreamed of doing. It's his contact with the people — whether it be cheering up a sad woman who had been crying all morning or a quiet good morning to the nurses in the hallway — that makes his time at Tendercare worthwhile.

"They all can make you laugh," he said.

Christine Iwan covers regional news. She can be reached at 966-0684 or ciwan@battlecr.gannett.com.

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